

REVITALISING HIGHER EDUCATION POLICIES: A PANACEA FOR GLOBAL SECURITY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

Education constitutes one of the socio-economic factors that determines development of a nation and contributes to mutual survival and safety of all individuals in the society. Renewing, restoring or revitalising education policies from time to time in line with the current trends in the society is the practice towards ascertaining global security and socio-economic development of various countries like Nigeria. This article has carefully examined concepts of higher education, global security and socio-economic development; Challenges of revitalising education policies such as; political interference in; admission of students, employment of staff and administration of higher education; Under-funding of higher education sector notable in frequent industrial action, interruption of academic activities and intermittent closure of higher educational institutions among others were examined. Recommendations towards allowing higher education institutions more autonomy in terms of administration and governance without political interference; government and other relevant agencies to increase funding of higher education sector among others, were made towards revitalising higher education policies as a panacea for global security and socio economic development of Nigeria.

Keywords: Revitalising Higher Education, Higher education policies, Global Security and Socio-Economic Development

Introduction

Nigeria as a country gives much credence to higher education otherwise termed tertiary education as the means for social and economic mobility, social transformation, as well as the major platform for higher level workforce development— managerial and technological. Chou, Jungblut,

Ravinet & Vukasovic (2017) points that; higher education is a domain that is rapidly becoming more politicised, politically salient and an embedded element of other public policies. Various factors such as continuous massification of higher education; implying that an increasing percentage of the population is participating or expects to participate in some form of higher education, and the fact that higher education has gradually become more relevant for other policy areas such as climate change, ageing, food security, and others requiring higher education and research systems to provide policy solutions; contribute to making higher education central to the development of modern states and societies. Higher education can be thus seen as a policy area that is becoming more important but through this; is treated less special and facing increased political pressure to perform (Gornitzka & Maassen, 2014). The importance of higher education demands quality attention on policies that are relevant to this level of education.

A policy is a deliberate system of principles to guide decisions and achieve rational outcomes. A policy is a statement of intent, and is implemented as a procedure or protocol. Policies are generally adopted by a governance body within an organisation. Policies are made for different sectors in the society such as education. Education policy consists of the principles and government policies in the educational sphere as well as the collection of laws and rules that govern the operation of education systems. Education occurs in many forms for many purposes through many institutions. Education policies are done to cover various aspects such as; school size, class size, school choice, , tracking, teacher selection, education and certification, teacher pay, teaching methods, curricular content, graduation requirements, school infrastructure investment, admission, funds, management and governance, teaching and research, gender issues, deregulation, commercialisation, privatisation and the values that schools are expected to uphold. (Ayo, Solaja and Soyewo, 2013). Revitalising policies therefore; involves the careful approach on issues regarding education towards improvement, revival or addition of vigour in education system.

Revitalising higher education policies depicts conscious efforts by education stakeholders to impart new life and vigor in education, which can be evident in analysing polices towards sustainable security and economic development in Nigeria.

Education policy analysis is the scholarly study of various policies that are pertinent to education. It seeks to answer questions about the purpose of education, the societal and personal objectives that education is designed to

attain, the methods for attaining them and the tools for measuring their success or failure. Educational policies are enormous; however, this write up considers some of the education policies that have a closer link with higher

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education, notably; admission policy, funds, management and governance, teaching and research, gender issues, commercialisation and privatisation of higher education.

The goal of educational policies is to facilitate desired changes in education system. Parker (2019) rightly attests that, policy analysis is an important tool in the development of education policy, due to the fact that policy analysis will provide education stakeholders with the ability to decide which of a given set of policies would have the greatest probability of helping the society through education. In carrying out policy analysis; Gire (2020) suggests the following steps as illustrated below:

The steps can be followed towards successful analysis of policies regarding higher education in Source: **Gire, 2020**

Higher Education

Higher education entails various types of education, provided in postsecondary institutions of learning and usually affording, at the end of a course of study, a named degree, diploma, or certificate of higher studies; it also includes teacher-training schools, junior colleges, and institutes of technology. Higher education, also called post-secondary education, third-level or tertiary education, is an optional final stage of formal learning that occurs after completion of secondary education. According to Okoro and Agaguam (2017:138) Higher Education embrace all organised learning activities at the tertiary level. Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2014) conceptualised tertiary education to embrace the universities, colleges of education, mono-technics and polytechnics with the following objectives:

- i. To add to national development through advanced significant manpower training
- ii. To cultivate and instill proper values for the survival of the society
- iii. To cultivate the intellectual proficiency of learners to comprehend and become responsive to their environments (local and external)
- iv. To gain both technical and academic skills that could aid learners to be resourceful and beneficial members of the society
- v. Promotion and encouragement of grants and community services
- vi. To build and solidify national unity; and,
- vii. To promote national and international understanding and institutions.

Ayo, Solaja, and Soyewo, (2013) attests that tertiary education in Nigeria is much more diversified and encompasses new types of institutions in the present dispensation, compared to the situation forty-eight years ago when higher education happened only in five public universities owned respectively by Northern, Western, and Eastern Regional Governments. The diversification of

tertiary education was intended to; develop a closer relationship between tertiary education and the external world, including greater responsiveness to labour market needs; enhance social and geographical access to tertiary education; provide high-level occupational preparation in a more applied and less theoretical way; accommodate the growing diversity of qualifications and expectations of school graduates among others.

The positive impact of higher education to the growth and development of any country makes it imperative for various policies to be made regarding this important level of education. Ayo, Solaja and Soyewo (2013) views that; higher education policy is very important in national agendas. The widespread recognition that higher education is a major driver of economic competitiveness in an increasingly knowledge- driven global economy has made higher education more important than ever before. Nigeria, along with other developing countries has not relented in efforts to improve on nation's education system in spite of bewildering and constraining economic situation in order to produce skilled manpower capable of effecting desired societal change via education policies. Higher Education policies as observed are channeled through: National University Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and National Commission on Colleges of Education (NCCE) among others.

Policies on Higher Education in Nigeria

Policies regarding higher education in Nigeria are adopted from western countries such as United Kingdom through their colonial master, the United States, through the governments' desperate need to improve the process of education in the country. These policies are mostly made on paper but not judiciously implemented (Adeniyi, 2016). Some notable policies on higher education in Nigeria such as:

Admission Policy

Admission policy entails a program statement of purpose, eligibility and requirements as well as application procedures for admission. All stipulated guidelines are considered in an admission policy. At higher education level in Nigeria, the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) is the government regulatory agency that administers a national unified tertiary matriculation examination (UTME) and informs tertiary educational institutions of applicant's scores. The general guidelines for admission into tertiary institutions in the country are contained in a brochure which provides detailed information on courses and entry requirements into higher education. Asien and Lawal (2010) points that, universities are guided by other admission policies such as quota system, catchment area, carrying capacity and educationally less developed states among others. The admission policy also requires that the ratio of 60:40 in favour of

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science to arts be maintained. Bases for admission by federal government are determined by: the UME score which take 45%; educationally developed areas are given 20%; catchment areas have 25% and 10% to the discretion of the Vice Chancellor. These policies give room for 45% admission based on merit and 55% based on geographical, socio-cultural and other parochial reasons. A close look at the admission policy depicts that quality of education is tempered with in various dimensions thereby; compromising standard and quality.

Funding

Finance is a major driver in actualising the various policies of higher education as well as in ensuring their smooth administration. In Nigeria the policy document on financing of higher education specifies that since education is an expensive social service, it requires adequate financial provision from government for the successful implementation of the various programmes. Sani (2017) identified the major source of fund to universities in Nigeria to be from government which provide about 90% of the total expenditure, for the administration of Universities and welcomes individuals, other organisations as well as individual Universities in providing the remaining 10%. However; in practice government appears unable to adequately fund higher education.

Administration and Governance of higher education in Nigeria

The administration of higher educational institutions refers to the means by which higher educational institutions are operated, organised and managed while, shared governance entails the inclusion of persons or groups within the University community in consultative meetings, decision-making and implementation. *Ogbogu (2013) identified areas of decision in higher education to include: personnel decisions, salary decisions, preparation of budget, determination of educational policies and others.*

Administration in higher education revolves around the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Provosts/ Rectors, Deans of Colleges, Faculties/Schools and Heads of Departments, in addition are; the Registrar, Bursar, Librarian as well as an array of other administrative staff who assist in managing the affairs of higher education. Academic and Administrative activities are carried out through committees of Council and Senate. To ensure shared governance, committees of students, academic and non academic staff are involved in Governance of higher education to a reasonable extent. However, administration and governance in Nigerian higher education appears to be constantly influenced by government and external agencies especially in the aspects of admission and employment of staff, this very often than not affects successful higher education administration and governance.

Research in Higher Education

Teaching and research are the most important sources of knowledge generation and they play key roles in promoting sustainable development in any society. Research is therefore an area of interest in higher education. Research has a link with formulation and implementation of policies leading to sustainable development of a country. As important as teaching and research is to successful higher education it is posed with so many challenges. Kpolovie (2017) points that, one of the hindrances of teaching and research is lack of robust funding from the government; self funding still remains the main mode of research financing for many researches in Nigerian higher education.

Gender Issues

The term gender refers to social construction of female and male identity. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) stressed that there will be provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system. In spite of this policy commitment, there is still a wide gender disparity in university education in Nigeria as there is consistent evidence on statistical difference between male and female enrolment in higher education in Nigeria (Mukoro, 2014). Gender inequality in Nigerian higher education is noticeable in the areas of; students' enrolment, staff employment and administrative policies which appear not to be gender friendly, therefore cannot meet with the students (most especially females) gender needs and demands.

In Nigeria, concern for gender equity has become a policy issue in higher educational institutions and some have started to address it. Some Universities now have centres for gender studies; an instrument through which gender can be mainstreamed in University Administration as an instrument for institutionalising gender equity in every aspect of University life. The overall goal of the Policy is to promote gender equity within the University system in order to guarantee organisational effectiveness, fundamental human rights and equity. This achievement has placed the University in its rightful position as one of the leading gender equitable institutions in Nigeria (Darvas, 2017). Theoretically, issues of gender disparity in higher education are tackled but practically the gap appears to widen as observed in Nigerian higher educational institutions.

Commercialisation of Higher Education in Nigeria

Commercialisation is the process at which government makes higher education as a profitable business or profit making institutions. That is, to operate as money-making ventures, source for funds for their activities internally and efficiently function without any subvention from the government. Chukwu and Ezepue (2018) observed that, commercialisation of higher education in Nigeria

has posed a situation whereby, many private investments are driven by profit which gives room for compromise to quality education and denial of access to education by many citizens. Commercialisation of education is blamable for the sprawling proliferation of private higher educational institutions in the country, the result is poor academic standards hence, most higher education institutions lack capacity to serve their clients and are characterised by inadequate infrastructure, insufficient and poorly qualified human resource as well as poor management systems. Okoro and Agaguam (2017) rightly attest to the importance and linkage of education to the development of the Nigerian society; however the quality of higher education as a system which serves as a mechanism of global security and sustainable development in Nigeria; is being confronted with the age-long difficulties as observed.

Global Security

Global security also called International security refers to the amalgamation of measures taken by states and international organisations, such as the United Nations, European Union, and others, to ensure mutual survival and safety. These measures include military action and diplomatic agreements such as treaties and conventions. International and national security is invariably linked. International security is national security or state security in the global arena. According to Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy ((2007), security comprises various components such as; economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security. A state of security in any nation is thus attained when there is; an assured basic income that will curtail poverty, unemployment and indebtedness amongst citizens of a nation; physical and economic access to basic food that will curtail hunger and famines; adequate health care to protect citizens from diseases and unhealthy lifestyles as well as prevent new recurrent diseases including epidemics and pandemics, poor nutrition, unsafe environment and unsafe lifestyles; healthy physical environment devoid of environmental degradation, natural disasters, pollution and resource depletion; security from physical violence that will keep citizens from the state torture, war, ethnic tension, crime, industrial, workplace or traffic accidents; safe membership in a group devoid of oppressive practices, ethnic violence and indigenous people vulnerability; a society that honors basic human rights making citizens free from political or state repression, torture, disappearance, human rights violations, detention and imprisonment. A close look at the fore mentioned view indicates that Nigeria as observed is still very far from attaining global security which is a key facilitator of socio-economic development.

Socio-Economic Development

Socio-economic development is defined in different ways in various contexts be it social, political, biological, science and technology, language and literature. In the socio-economic context, development means the improvement of people's lifestyles through improved education, incomes, skills development and employment. According to Bounthavy (2015) socio-economic development is characterised by rapid growth, stability and sustainability through improved GDP ; comprehensive basic infrastructure, especially in the rural areas; improving governance efficiency and transparency; achieving Millennium Development Goals with a quality by adopting appropriate technology and skills ; International integration and openness trade as well as ensuring cultural and social progress, preserving natural resources, protecting the environment, ensuring political stability, peace and an orderly society. According to Marjan (2018), all the countries around the world have certain targets for becoming an ideal and economically stable nation. Countries strive hard to achieve such targets or goals which are; Economic growth, full employment, price stability, balance of payment, economic security, economic freedom, economic efficiency, economic equity and economic stability; these targets of becoming an ideal and economically stable country cannot thrive devoid of security.

Revitalising Higher Education Policies for Global Security and Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria

The important role of higher education in enhancing global security which is a yardstick towards socio-economic development in any nation cannot be overemphasised. The Global Partnership for Education (GPE), (2015) attests that education remains a tool for facilitating socio-economic development and other facets of development. The aspects of development include; poverty, hunger, good health, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, clean energy, good jobs and economic growth, infrastructure, inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption, protect the planet, protect life below water, protect life on land, peace and justice, partnerships for the goals. All the aspects of development can be attained through education.

The overall aim of education is to enable individuals with knowledge and the ability to apply that knowledge. Through higher education, substantial numbers of people are rescued out of poverty since educated individuals are availed with employment opportunities and higher wages for skilled workers. Furthermore, education can influence learners' attitude and assists them to grow up with social values that are more beneficial to themselves and the nation. According to Chepkuto, Ombongi, and Kipsang (2014), education is a yardstick to create a conducive environment to meeting the emotional, social, and intellectual needs of diverse groups of individuals interested in empowering themselves towards a

peaceful environment devoid of insecurity that guarantee sustainable development of a nation.

The fore mentioned views depict that education has enormous role to play for the holistic existence and development of a nation. Revitalisation of educational policies is thus a panacea for educating individuals towards sustainable security and economic development. However; there are notable challenges towards successful revitalisation of higher education policies in Nigeria.

Challenges of Policy Revitalisation of Higher Education in Nigeria

Higher education in Nigeria has been poised with observable challenges emanating from introduction of policies which are not original to Nigeria, in other words the foundation of policies on higher education is very often shaky at the onset. This situation makes it very difficult for implementation to thrive; revitalisation of higher education policies that appears to be in theory, without adequate plans towards implementation becomes a difficult task. Some notable challenges of revitalisation of higher education policies include;

i. The demand and enrolment in higher educational institutions in the country has increased tremendously while the population of academic staff continue to decline resulting in shortage of manpower in the sector and high staff student ratio. This is further worsened by political interference in; admission of students, employment of staff and administration of higher education.

ii. Poor physical infrastructures are notable in most higher education institutions even with the TETFund intervention.

iii. Under-funding of higher education sector is evident; this results in frequent industrial action, interruption of academic activities and intermittent closure of higher educational institutions.

iv. Exorbitant fees charged in higher institutions is one of the major problems facing higher education in Nigeria.

v. There is notable lack of professionalism and productivity due to poor remuneration of personnel in higher educational institutions.

vi. Management of higher education, whose primary concern is to ensure sustenance and quality output is at some quarters; influenced by politics and financial pudency which influence government policies on education.

Higher education is not supported adequately in the area of research capacities and infrastructure.

Conclusion

Higher education is a yardstick for producing human resource to pave way for development of the society at large. From the foregoing, higher education policies seem to suffer set back due to the identified and other challenges in Nigeria. Through policy revitalisation and proper implementation of the existent

higher education policies in Nigeria sustainable security and economic development will be attained.

Suggestions for successful policy revitalisation in Higher Educations

The following suggestions are made towards improved higher education in Nigeria:

- i. Allowing higher education institutions more autonomy in terms of administration and governance without political interference.
- ii. The government and other relevant agencies should increase funding of higher education sector
- iii. Management of higher education should regulate the process of admission of students and employment of academic staff in higher institutions to be strictly on merit.
- iv. Government and other education stakeholders should improve in the welfare of staff to reduce academic time loss.
- v. Management of higher education should establish centres for gender and social policy studies in all higher institutions. This will serve as an instrument for institutionalising gender equity in every aspect of higher education life in Nigeria.
- vi. Socio-economic empowerment should be enhanced in higher institutions in areas towards: development of all aspects of national economy; poverty eradication; socio-cultural, economic development and effective public administration; national defense and security among others.

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